



U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement

December 13, 2005

News Release

14 ILLEGAL WORKERS ARRESTED AT GREATER NEW ORLEANS INDUSTRIAL EDUCATION COUNCIL *ICE Special Agents team up to protect the petroleum industry*

KENNER, La. — Fourteen illegal aliens were arrested Friday at the Greater New Orleans Industrial Education Council (GNOIEC) in Kenner, La., announced Michael A. Holt, special agent-in-charge of the New Orleans office of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).

The arrested workers were employed by A Golden Seal Restoration and were scheduled to work at the Conoco Phillips Alliance Refinery in Belle Chasse, La. All of the arrested workers possessed counterfeit social security cards and identity documents, which they presented to A Golden Seal Restoration to obtain employment. GNOIEC is a non-profit organization that provides safety-training classes for workers at petrochemical plants in the greater New Orleans area.

ICE has been working with the GNOIEC organization to train their staff and assist in identifying foreign nationals who use counterfeit documents to obtain employment at critical infrastructure sites. The training program has been successful, and ICE and GNOIEC routinely work together to share information.

The arrests are part of an ongoing ICE criminal investigation of subcontractors operating in the petroleum industry. Critical infrastructures such as airports, defense installations, and bio-agriculture industries are a primary law enforcement priority of ICE.

As of today, 14 illegal workers were identified as having attempted to access the Conoco-Phillips Petroleum Refinery. The individuals have been presented for prosecution to the U.S. Attorney's Office in the Eastern District of Louisiana on charges that include using fraudulent documents to gain employment or illegal re-entry to the United States after deportation.

"This was a targeted law enforcement action based upon information developed over a long period," said Holt. "Protecting the integrity of the petroleum industry in this region is a crucial part of ICE's continuing enforcement strategy. When an individual uses fraudulent documents to get a job, they hide their true identity and history. We need to know exactly who is working on our critical infrastructure programs.

Under federal law, employers who knowingly hire or refer unauthorized workers face criminal prosecution and substantial fines. To aid employers with the screening process, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services — a separate agency under the Department of Homeland Security — operates the Basic Pilot Program, a Web-based system that businesses can use to verify the employment eligibility of newly hired workers. Nationwide, there are more than 15,000 employer sites linked into the Basic Pilot Program. Interested employers may call 1-888-464-4218 to obtain more information about the program.

Friday's arrests are the latest in ICE's ongoing efforts to target and remove illegal aliens working at sensitive sites and critical infrastructure locations around the nation, including defense facilities, nuclear plants, chemical plants, airports and seaports. In accordance with ICE's homeland security mission, ICE special agents prioritize worksite enforcement efforts by focusing on investigations related to critical infrastructure and national security.

Some other recent cases include the following:

- On Dec. 1, ICE special agents teamed up with the Air Force Office of Special Investigation (OSI) and base Military Police to arrest 22 Mexican nationals who were illegally working for one of six subcontractors on a housing project at Kirtland Air Force Base in Albuquerque, N.M. The individuals were arrested following a document check at the military installation.
- Also on Dec. 1, ICE special agents arrested 20 illegal aliens who were unlawfully employed by a local company in Kenner, La. The company reportedly provided workers to several critical infrastructure facilities in the greater New Orleans area, including New Orleans International Airport and the Veterans Administration Hospital.
- On Nov. 30, ICE agents screened the identification of more than 450 contractors and sub-contractors working at the Naval Air Station Joint Reserve Base-New Orleans in Belle Chasse, La. ICE agents detained six illegal aliens today performing contract work at the base. The Naval Air Station had previously conducted its own investigation and formally barred more than a dozen workers from the facility. The facility later requested the assistance of ICE to further investigate employees working for contractors there. On, Nov. 24, ICE agents and base security intercepted 10 illegal aliens attempting to enter the Navy facility. The ICE investigation into the hiring practices of companies performing contract work at the Bell Chasse facility is ongoing.
- On Oct. 26, ICE agents took custody of six illegal aliens attempting to enter Fort Irwin, a U.S. Army desert warfare training facility in California, to perform contract work there. Base security had requested the assistance of ICE after questioning the validity of the documents presented by the illegal aliens as they attempted to enter the base for employment. ICE agents have placed the aliens into removal proceedings. The ICE investigation is continuing.

- Also on Oct. 26, ICE agents took custody of an illegal alien attempting to enter the Marine Corps Logistics Base in Barstow, Calif., to perform contract work there. Security officials at the base intercepted the individual after he allegedly presented a fraudulent driver's license and social security card to officials. The alien was arriving for his first day of work at the base on behalf on a contract company. The ICE investigation is continuing.
- On Oct. 5, ICE arrested three illegal aliens who served as language instructors at the U.S. Army Special Operations Command at Fort Bragg, N.C. Two were criminally charged with using false documents to gain employment and making false statements. The third was charged with being in the country illegally. The employees provided instruction to U.S. Special Forces.
- On Oct. 4, seven illegal aliens were arrested at the U.S. Air Force Base in Mountain Home, Idaho, following an investigation by ICE and the Air Force Office of Special Investigations. The men were working for Nutek Construction, which was sub-contracted to build housing on the air base.
- On Aug. 26, ICE agents arrested six Mexican nationals at the U.S. Army's Fort Irwin in Barstow, Calif. The men were working illegally for Laurence-Hovenier Inc., a construction company building military housing at the base. The workers, most of whom had security badges authorizing them to enter the base, were identified after agents audited the hiring records of more than 700 Laurence-Hovenier workers. The audit found that more than 40 percent of the employees on the company's payroll might not have been authorized to work in the U.S. The investigation continues.
- On July 26, ICE agents arrested six illegal aliens working at the Homestead Air Reserve Base in Homestead, Fla. The men, who were contracted by a Texas-based corporation, were working on a major runway-resurfacing project. Officers working at the Air Reserve's main gate noticed irregularities in the documents presented by the three men and called ICE for follow-up.

#ICE#

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of four integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.